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SUBJECT: IRISH RESPONSE TO TURKEY AND PRE-GAERC DEMARCHES

REF: A. STATE 244333

[1](#)B. STATE 240286

Classified By: political-economic counselor Mary Daly, reasons 1.4 (B) and (D)

[1](#)1. (U) On November 17, Post delivered reftels' talking points to Gerald Keown, Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) EU correspondent.

Turkey

[1](#)2. (C) In a November 12 conversation with the Ambassador, Michael Collins, senior advisor to Prime Minister Ahern, said that Ireland would support Turkey's EU candidacy. He noted that Ireland saw Turkey as an important market and did not have the same social concerns as those EU Member States with large Muslim populations. Keown amplified these remarks with a more detailed explanation of where things stood in the EU. Ireland would support a European Council decision to begin early EU accession negotiations with Turkey in the context of an EU consensus on that step, said Keown. He noted that Ireland acknowledged Turkey's efforts to fulfill the Copenhagen criteria, as did the Commission's October 6 report on the accession issue. Keown expected that a decision endorsing early accession negotiations would include safeguard mechanisms for suspending negotiations in the event of significant policy reversals by the Turkish Government. He also pointed out that the December 17 European Council meeting would discuss the option of placing conditions on accession negotiations related to the implementation of Turkey's legislative and other reform programs, but that the same conditions would apply generally to any candidate country. When emboff asked whether the EU would seek to apply more specific conditions in Turkey's case, Keown said that this would depend on Member States in which Turkey's accession posed a more serious domestic issue. He added that an outstanding issue for Turkey was recognition of the Republic of Cyprus and that the possible amendment of Turkey's customs union agreement with the EU to incorporate the new Member States would be a positive step in that direction.

Middle East

[1](#)3. (C) The EU looked forward to close coordination with the Bush Administration in advancing the Middle East Peace Process, said Keown. He did not know whether Ireland was considering contributions to the International Finance Corporation's Private Enterprise Partnership -- Middle East and North Africa (PEP-MENA). He noted that Ireland and other EU Member States were examining ways to support small and medium enterprises in the region through the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership (Barcelona Process). He added that the November 30 Euromed ministerial meeting would possibly address such assistance.

China

[1](#)4. (C) Keown said that the situation regarding the China arms embargo had not changed since the EU had decided in October on the need for further consultations at the technical level. No European consensus on lifting the embargo was at hand. Keown acknowledged that the November 16-18 visit of Chinese Vice Premier Huang Ju had been an occasion to discuss the embargo as well as other issues, such as trade and human rights. Vice Premier Huang, said Keown, had made clear China's desire that the embargo be lifted. His Irish interlocutors had repeated that the EU had not achieved consensus on the embargo issue.

Kosovo

[1](#)5. (C) The GOI agreed that local government/decentralization pilot projects in Kosovo should get underway as soon as possible, said Keown. He noted that the Kosovo Serb boycott of the recent Kosovo elections had been unhelpful, but he

expressed reservations about the U.S. point that work in Kosovo would continue even if Kosovo Serbs refused to participate. Keown elaborated that outstanding issues could only be addressed on a cross-community basis. He noted that politicians in Serbia had used the election boycott to political advantage, and he observed that progress in Kosovo would therefore require efforts to engage both Serbia and Kosovo's Serbian population.

Belarus

16. (C) According to Keown, EU Member States are deeply pessimistic about Belarus. He conceded that EU policy had not only been unsuccessful, but had also worked to isolate Belarusian society. Ireland agreed that it was important to broach that isolation; the question was how. He noted that efforts to engage members of society could expose them to risks of arrest or personal harm. Keown expressed confidence that the Dutch EU Presidency, following the line taken during Ireland's presidency, would maintain a tough stance against the Belarusian Government. The November 22 GAERC meeting would issue conclusions to that end.

Cyprus

17. (C) Keown described the Cyprus situation as a failure on both sides. He said the EU would concur that a strong aid and trade package was critical to the prospects of pro-solution forces in the north. Legal and technical factors, however, stood behind proposals to conduct Commission programs from the south. He acknowledged recent USG efforts to engage north Cyprus, and he said the EU continued to explore ways that were legally permissible to provide assistance to the north.

ESDP

18. (C) Keown said that GOI support for closer EU-NATO coordination was a given. The GOI, he added, was pleased that preparations for SFOR's drawdown were proceeding smoothly. On the question of Irish participation in EU battlegroups, Keown noted that the GOI would not take any decision until after discussions at the upcoming EU Military Capabilities Conference.
KENNY